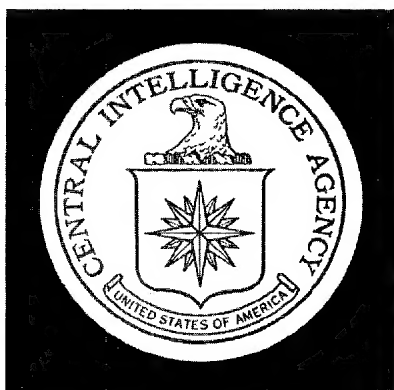


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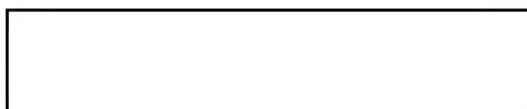
MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

NSA review completed

Top Secret

8 December 1966



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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Liberation Front has announced the appointment of a permanent representative to Hanoi. The announcement also contained an optimistic account of Communist prospects in the South.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: American troops swept a Viet Cong stronghold immediately after a B-52 raid and report finding a complex of bunkers and trenches (Para. 1). A total of 11 Viet Cong were killed on 8 December by units of the US 1st Infantry Division taking part in Operation BISMARCK in Binh Duong Province (Para. 2). A Viet Cong base camp and associated supplies were discovered by American troops in Operation CHARLESTON south of Saigon (Para. 3)

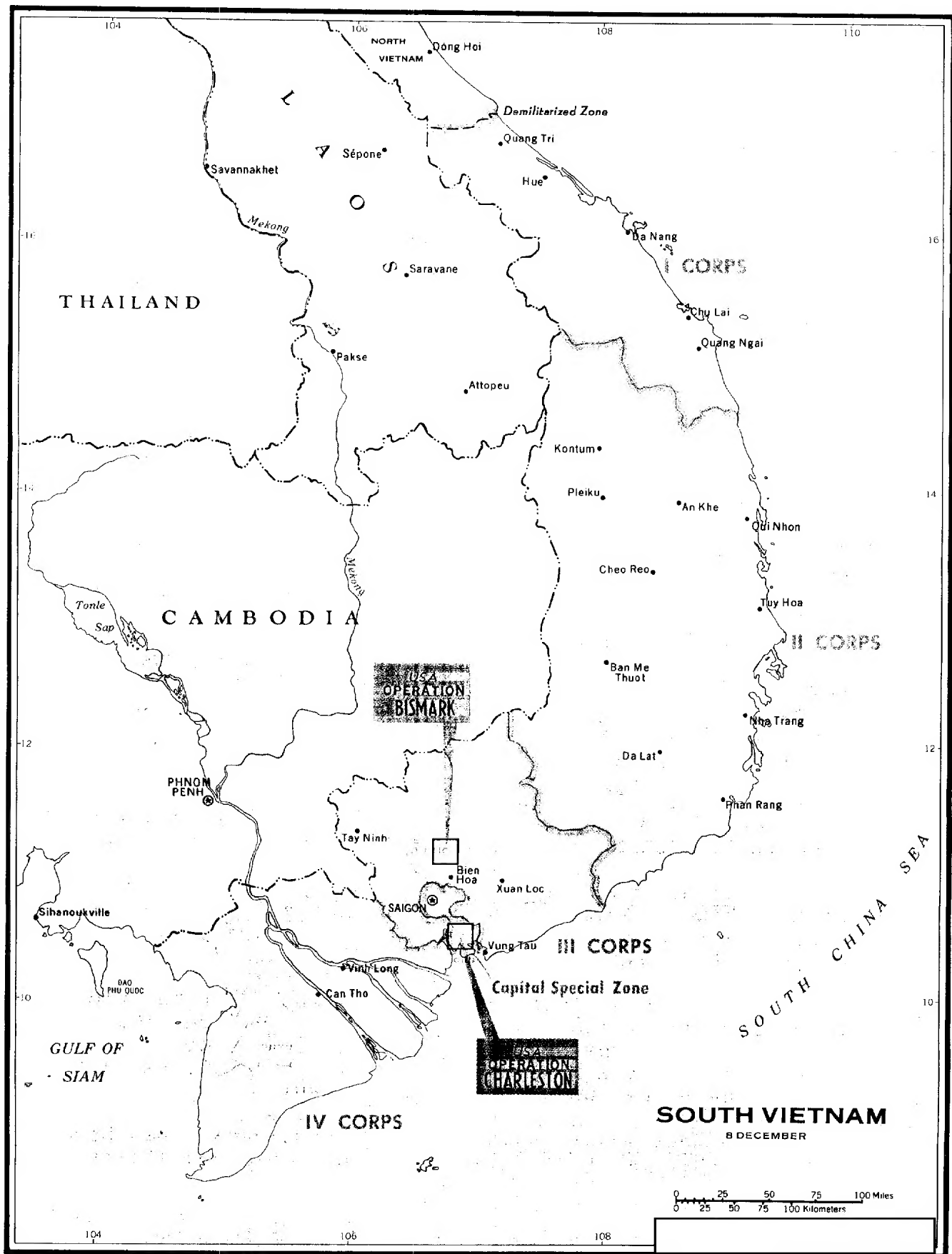
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: It is too early to ascertain what repercussions may result from the incident involving the mayor of Saigon and US Military Police on 8 December (Paras. 1-2). Radio Hanoi put the blame for the killing of Constituent Assembly member Tran Van Van on Ky and Thieu (Para. 3).

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V. Communist Political Developments: A Liberation Front communiqué has claimed great victories over the US in recent months (Paras. 1-2). The announcement also stated that a permanent Liberation Front representative to Hanoi has been named (Paras. 3-4).

VI. Other Major Aspects: Road construction has been noted in the Dien Bien Phu area of North Vietnam (Paras. 1-3).



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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US soldiers moved into an area about 25 miles north of Saigon immediately after a predawn B-52 raid on 8 December and reported killing eight Viet Cong. The area was laced with trenches, bunkers, and automatic weapons positions, and is believed to be the site from which the Viet Cong have launched many of their attacks on Saigon. Nine Communists were captured and 127 Viet Cong suspects were apprehended in the operation.

2. Eleven Communist soldiers were killed on 8 December by elements of the US 1st Infantry Division participating in Operation BISMARK in Binh Duong Province. Enemy losses included 14 captured and 88 suspects detained. No American casualties were reported.

3. Other units of the US 1st Infantry Division taking part in Operation CHARLESTON in the Rung Sat Special Zone ten miles southeast of Saigon located a Viet Cong base camp on 8 December. Discovered in the area were two sampans, cases of hand grenades, claymore mines, medical supplies, more than 20 weapons, and a large quantity of ammunition. Six Viet Cong have been killed since this search-and-destroy operation began on 27 November.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. It is not clear what repercussions may result from the "arrest" on 8 December of Saigon mayor Colonel Van Van Cua by US Military Police. Premier Ky stated that he had ordered a "blackout" of the event, presumably referring to Vietnamese news services.

2. This is not the first time Cua has been involved in a notorious incident. On at least one previous occasion, he detained and intimidated a Vietnamese businessman for personal reasons. His action in that case was similar to that of General Loan who detained a subcabinet official, thus setting off the recent cabinet crisis. Both incidents were used by dissident southern ministers as ammunition against the Ky government which relies heavily on the power of police director Loan and his colleagues.

Hanoi Reaction to Tran Van Van Assassination

3. Radio Hanoi on 8 December accused Ky and Thieu of sending "agents into the streets to shoot Tran Van Van." The Hanoi broadcast cited Western press accounts of the killing, which suggested that the conflict between northerners and southerners might be sharpened as a result of Van's assassination.

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4. [redacted] the murder suspect apprehended by the police denied during questioning that he was a Viet Cong or had done the shooting. Later in the day, however, the suspect admitted at a press conference that he had been a Viet Cong agent for some three years, and had been sent to Saigon to assassinate Van.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

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3. A Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman asserted on 5 December that the 30 November "incident" was another US "war provocation" against China, and a People's Daily Commentator article added on 6 December that the US regards China as its "greatest enemy" and wishes to "strangle" China "by all means including war." The Chinese reaction, however, did not threaten any Chinese countermeasures and restated Peking's position that a Sino-US war would be the result of a US attack, not a Chinese initiative.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Liberation radio announced on 7 December that the Front held a central committee meeting on 4-5 December. According to the announcement, the delegates were given an optimistic report on the military situation--which covered both the earlier 1965-66 dry season "counteroffensive" and the current 1966-67 winter-spring campaign. As in all other recent Viet Cong propaganda, guerrilla warfare was extolled as having been largely responsible for these "victories." The delegates were told that not only had the Viet Cong lost no ground in either of these campaigns, but also that they had made significant gains in the northern part of the country--in Quang Tri and Thu Thien provinces. There was some hint, however, of problems, particularly in food production.

2. The conference appears to have concentrated on the need to increase the Front's popular base. Several paragraphs were devoted to the theme of strengthening and enlarging the "united front of all patriotic forces" against the Americans. The broadcast appealed several times to all "patriotic Vietnamese" to forget their religious, nationality, and political differences in the interests of working together for national independence.

3. A statement at the very end of the transmission announced that the Front had named a permanent representative to Hanoi. Although Front members occasionally appear in the DRV as visitors and the clandestine traffic between North and South Vietnam is extensive, the Vietnamese Communists have always been reluctant to acknowledge any official liaison on a permanent or continuing basis between Hanoi and the Front. Although the Front has had overseas representatives throughout the Communist world and in a few free world countries for as long as four years, the Front has until now shied away from any overt association with Hanoi.

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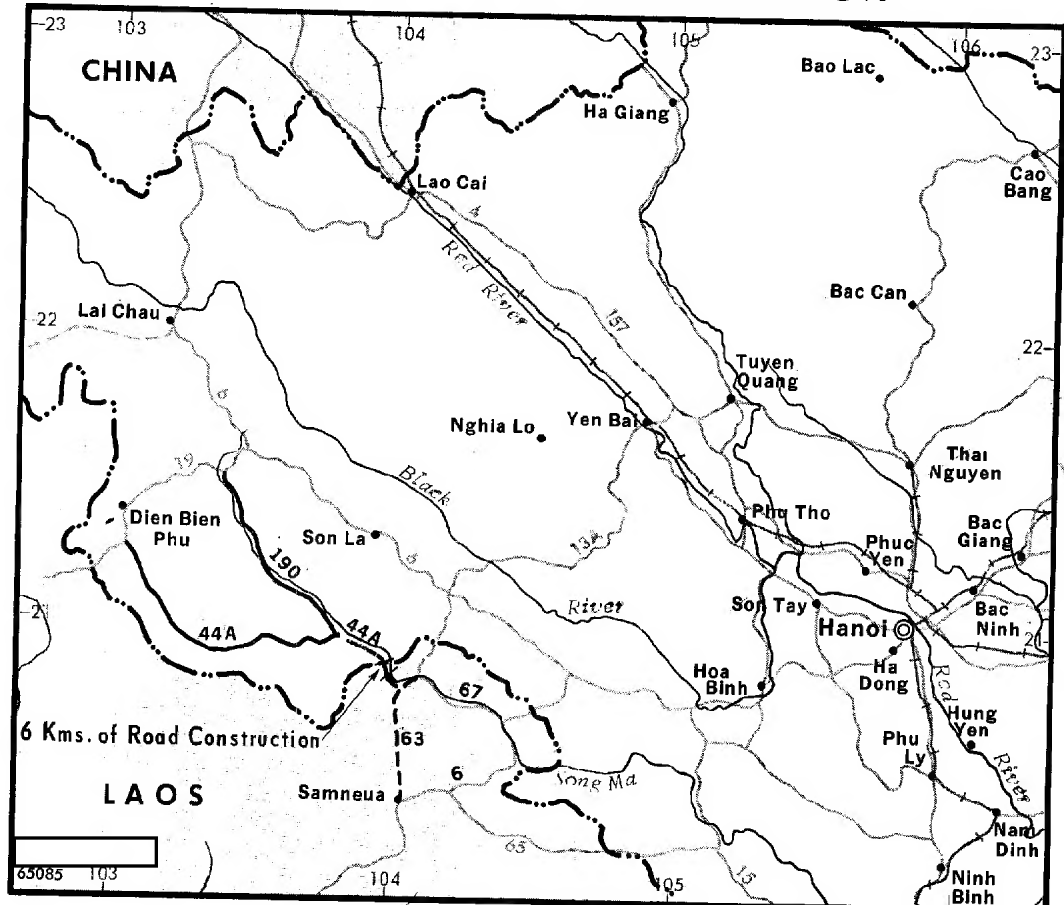
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4. The status of the new Front representative is not indicated in the 7 December broadcast, but it is possible that he will have the same semi-diplomatic status as overseas Front representatives have in other countries. The usual practice is to accredit the Front official to a nonofficial organization. In North Vietnam, the mass organization which has always been used to communicate officially and openly with the Front is the North Vietnamese Fatherland Front.

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LAOS-DRV BORDER: ROAD CONSTRUCTION



VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Photography [] reveals the beginnings of a new road connection between the region of the DRV southeast of Dien Bien Phu and northern Laos.

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2. The photography showed that the southern portion of deteriorated Route 190 had been restored and that some work may have recently been performed to repair Route 44A up the Laos border. From a point four kilometers south of the Laos/North Vietnam border, there was a six-kilometer cut for a new road that may be extended to Samneua which is already a major center serving trucks entering Laos by way of Route 6/65.

3. The new connection with Laos--judging by its location--is designed to provide a shorter route between Samneua and Dien Bien Phu and other regions of northwest North Vietnam as well as to open new routes within North Vietnam for supplying the war effort in northern Laos. Up to now, all truck-borne supplies for this purpose have been delivered by way of Routes 6/65 and 7, which connect respectively with the delta area and the southern provinces of North Vietnam.

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